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## Explore the caves of Aruba!



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## Trump begins firings of FAA air traffic control staff just weeks after fatal DC plane crash

By TARA COPP

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Trump administration has begun firing several hundred Federal Aviation Administration employees, upending staff on a busy air travel weekend and just weeks after a January fatal mid-air collision at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Probationary workers were targeted in late night emails Friday notifying them they had been fired, David Spero, president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists union, said in a statement.

The impacted workers include personnel hired for FAA radar, landing and navigational aid maintenance, one air traffic controller told the Associated Press. The air traffic controller was not authorized to talk to the media and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association said in a brief statement Monday it was "analyzing the effect of the reported federal employee terminations on aviation safety, the national airspace system and our



Salvage crews work on recovering wreckage near the site in the Potomac River of a mid-air collision between an American Airlines jet and a Black Hawk helicopter at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Thursday, Feb. 6, 2025, in Arlington, Va.

Associated Press

members."

Other FAA employees who were fired were working on an urgent and classified early warning radar system the Air Force had announced in 2023 for Hawaii to detect incoming cruise missiles, through a program that was in part funded by the Department of Defense. It's one of several

programs that the FAA's National Defense Program manages that involve radars providing longer-range detection around the country's borders. Due to the nature of their work, staff in that office typically provide an extensive knowledge transfer before retiring to make sure no institutional knowledge is lost,

said Charles Spitzer-Stadtlander, one of the employees in that branch who was terminated.

The Hawaii radar and the FAA National Defense Program office working on it "is about protecting national security," Spitzer-Stadtlander said. "I don't think they even knew what NDP does, they just thought, oh no big

deal, he just works for the FAA."

"This is about protecting national security, and I'm scared to death," Spitzer-Stadtlander said. "And the American public should be scared too."

Spero said messages began arriving after 7 p.m. on Friday and continued late into the night. More might be notified over the long weekend or barred from entering FAA buildings on Tuesday, he said.

The employees were fired "without cause nor based on performance or conduct," Spero said, and the emails were "from an 'exec order' Microsoft email address" not a government email address. A copy of the termination email that was provided to the AP shows the sending address from the address "ASK\_AHR EXEC\_Orders@usfaa.mail.outlook.com."

The firings hit the FAA when it faces a shortfall in controllers. Federal officials have been raising concerns about an overtaxed and understaffed air traffic control system for years, especially after a series of close calls between planes at U.S. airports. □

## 'No kings on Presidents Day' rings out from protests against Trump and Musk

By MICHAEL CASEY

Associated Press

**BOSTON (AP)** — Protesters against President Donald Trump and his policies braved frigid temperatures to demonstrate Monday at rallies corresponding with the Presidents Day holiday. Dubbed "No Kings on Presidents Day" by the 50501 Movement, the latest protests came less than two weeks after a similar nationwide event on Feb. 5 drew participants in dozens of cities. Both protests denounced Trump and billionaire adviser Elon Musk, the leader of Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency, an outside-government organization designed to slash federal spending.

Nearly 1,000 people marched in the snow from the Statehouse in Boston to City Hall, chanting "Elon

Musk has got to go" and "No kings on Presidents Day!" The temperature was below freezing with wind



People take part in the "No Kings Day" protest on Presidents Day in Washington, in support of federal workers and against recent actions by President Donald Trump and Elon Musk, Monday, Feb. 17, 2025, by the Capitol in Washington.

Associated Press

chills in the teens.

Boston protesters, some dressed in Revolutionary War-style clothing from the 1700s, carried signs saying such things as "This is a Coup" and "Cowards Bow to Trump, Patriots Stand Up." One sign had a depiction of Uncle Sam saying "I Want You to Resist."

"I thought it was important to be here on Presidents Day to demonstrate for what America stands for," said Emily Manning, 55, a Boston engineer who came to the rally with her two teenage sons. "American values are not the values of the plutocracy or the limited few rich people." Organizers of Monday's protests, which were focused on state capitals

and major cities including Washington, D.C.; Orlando, Florida; and Seattle, said they were targeting "anti-democratic and illegal actions of the Trump administration and its plutocratic allies."

One sign at the rally that attracted hundreds in the nation's capital said, "Deport Musk Dethrone Trump."

Many demonstrations were slated for cities where temperatures were well below freezing as a polar vortex worked its way across the country.

The rallies followed a series of Trump executive orders and came just days after layoffs across federal agencies as part of an effort to reduce the government workforce. □

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## The anti-Musk protest movement is expected to ramp up with Congress on recess

By STEVE PEOPLES

AP National Political Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Donald Trump is the president, but billionaire Elon Musk is the focus for thousands of Democratic activists launching a protest campaign this week to fight the Trump administration's push to gut federal health, education and human services agencies.

Hundreds of protests are scheduled outside congressional offices and Tesla dealerships, with organizers hoping to send a pointed message to members of Congress who are on recess this week.

The backlash still hasn't approached the intensity of protests during and after Trump's first inauguration eight years ago. But a loose coalition of Democrats and progressives is coalescing around Musk's rise as Trump's top lieutenant and his purge of the federal bureaucracy.

"He's a major weak link in the MAGA coalition," Ezra Levin, co-founder of the progressive group Indivisible, said of Musk. "I can't think of something that polls worse than the richest man in the world is coming after your Social Security check or your Meals on Wheels or your Head Start."

Indivisible, which claims more than 1,300 local chapters nationwide, is encouraging members to protest at the offices of their members of Congress, regardless of political party. The group also offered a step-by-step guide for protesting at dealerships for Tesla, Musk's electric vehicle company.

The memo encourages protesters to stay on sidewalks and public spaces



Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., speaks during a rally against the policies of President Donald Trump and Elon Musk at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025.

Associated Press

and to avoid any actions that might directly interfere with business operations, such as blocking entrances or trespassing on private property. It also calls for Tesla protesters to stay on message: "This is about Musk's political takeover, not Tesla, SpaceX, or X as companies."

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders is launching what he's calling "a national tour to fight oligarchy" with stops in working-class districts of Iowa and Nebraska this week.

Democratic National Committee Chair Ken Martin will hit the road for the first time as party leader as well. The newly elected DNC chair will travel to Pennsylvania, Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri in the coming days to meet with local Democratic officials and labor leaders, spokesperson Hannah Muldavin said.

Like the protesters, Martin is expected to seize on

Musk's role. During a meeting with labor leaders in Pittsburgh, for example, he plans to highlight Musk's recent focus on the Department of Labor, which could put "the integrity of data like the unemployment rate and inflation rate at risk, which is important for a stable U.S. economy and, by extension, working people," Muldavin said.

Aware of the intense displeasure from their party's base, many House Democrats plan to be proactive. The House Democratic Policy and Communications Committee issued a memo ahead of the recess instructing Democrats to embrace "nine days of visibility" and said it was essential for members to host one town hall, in-person or via telephone, and at least one community event that highlights the "devastating impacts" of Trump and Musk's actions.

The wave of protests

comes at a critical moment as fractured Democrats struggle to stop the Republican president's purge of the federal bureaucracy, which features thousands of layoffs inside departments focused on public health, education, veterans affairs and human services, among others.

Firings in recent days at the Department of Veterans Affairs include researchers working on cancer treatment, opioid addiction, prosthetics and burn pit exposure, according to U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, a Democrat from Washington state. The cuts also include more than 5,000 employees at the Department of Health and Human Services and roughly one-tenth of the workforce at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In some cases, Musk's team is trying with Trump's blessing but without congressional approval to shutter

entire agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Education and the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Trump has defended the cuts as necessary to eliminate waste and fraud. And he has praised Musk's work with his Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, saying it has found "shocking" evidence of wasteful spending. He signed an executive order expanding Musk's influence.

Musk, meanwhile, has defended the swift and extensive cuts he's pushing across the federal government while acknowledging there have been mistakes.

Democrats in Congress condemn the moves as dangerous, but without control of either chamber of Congress, there is little they can do to stop the Trump administration aside from turning to the courts. Still, three of the nation's largest progressive groups Indivisible, MoveOn and the Working Families Party are coordinating this week's protests to send a clear message to elected officials in both major political parties that they must do more. Still, Democratic members of Congress may face their own voters' fury. MoveOn, which boasts a membership of nearly 10 million, is hosting dozens of rallies outside town halls and congressional offices for those members who do not host public events. The group will focus on "persuadable House Republicans whose votes will be crucial to opposing the Trump-Musk agenda," according to a preview of its recess week plan. □

## Trump nominates Ed Martin, an ally who defended Jan. 6 rioters, to stay as top D.C. federal prosecutor

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Conservative activist Ed Martin, who echoed Donald Trump's baseless claims of a stolen 2020 election and defended Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol rioters, was nominated by the president on Monday to be the top federal prosecutor in Washington on a permanent basis. Martin had been serving as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia on an interim basis since just after Trump, a Republican, was sworn in for his second term on Jan. 20. His appointment must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

"Since Inauguration Day, Ed has been doing a great job as Interim U.S. Attorney, fighting tirelessly to restore Law and Order, and make our Nation's Capital Safe and Beautiful Again," Trump wrote in a post on his Truth Social platform. "He will get the job done."

Martin, who grew up in New Jersey, has an English degree from the College of the Holy Cross and spent two years studying at the Gregorian Pontifical Uni-



**Ed Martin speaks at an event hosted by Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., at the Capitol in Washington, June 13, 2023.**

versity in Rome as a Rotary Scholar. He earned a law degree from St. Louis University.

Martin supervised legal clinics for low-income residents as director of the human rights office for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Louis and, for two decades

before becoming U.S. attorney, ran his own law practice and was active in Republican politics, including as the head of the Missouri Republican Party. As interim U.S. attorney, Martin oversaw the dismissals of hundreds of Jan. 6 cases after Trump par-

doned defendants, commuted sentences or vowed to throw them out. He also ordered an internal review of prosecutors' use of a felony charge against hundreds of Capitol rioters and directed employees to hand over files, emails and other documents.

**Associated Press**

As U.S. attorney, Martin has also defended the work of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, saying that prosecutors would "pursue any and all legal action against anyone who impedes" the group's work, which includes accessing government computer systems and scrutinizing spending. Lawyer Mike Davis, a Trump ally, heralded Martin in a social media post as the "perfect choice" to serve as U.S. attorney in Washington. Martin, he said, "will bring much-needed accountability and refocus the office on DC violent street crimes making DC safe again for all Americans."

Alexis Loeb, the former deputy chief of the section that prosecuted the Jan. 6 cases, said when Martin was appointed on an interim basis that he appears to be in the role "purely to execute on the president's political priorities more so than the work of protecting public safety in Washington." □

## Police arrest apparent leader of cultlike 'Zizian' group linked to multiple killings in the US



**This combination of images from top left shows 2019 Sonoma County Sheriff's office booking mug shots of Jack LaSota, Alexander Leatham, Emma Borhanian and, at bottom left, Gwen Danielson, court appearance of Maximilian Snyder and a Newport City Inn surveillance video image of Teresa Youngblut. They are associates of LaSota, also known as "Ziz."**

**By MICHAEL CASEY  
Associated Press**

**BOSTON (AP)** — The apparent leader of a cultlike group known as the Zizians has been arrested in Maryland along with another member of the group, Maryland State Police said Monday.

Jack Lasota, 34, was arrested Sunday along with Michelle Zajko, 33, of Media, Pennsylvania. They face multiple charges including trespassing, obstructing and hindering and possession of a handgun in the vehicle.

A bail hearing for the two is scheduled for 11 a.m. Tuesday at Allegany District Court.

The Zizians have been tied to the killing of U.S. Border Patrol Agent David Maland near the Canadian border in January and five other homicides in Vermont, Pennsylvania and California.

Maland, 44, was killed in a Jan. 20 shootout following a traffic stop in Coventry, Vermont, a small town about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the Canadian border. Officials have offered few details of the cross-country investigation, which broke open after the Jan. 20 shooting death of

Maland. Associated Press interviews and a review of court records and online postings tell the story of how a group of young, highly intelligent computer scientists, most of them in their 20s and 30s, met online, shared anarchist beliefs, and became increasingly violent.

Their goals aren't clear, but online writings span topics from radical veganism and gender identity to artificial intelligence. At the middle of it all is "Ziz," who appears to be the leader of the strange group members who called themselves "Zizians." She has been seen near multiple crime scenes and has connections to various suspects. LaSota published a dark and sometimes violent blog under the name Ziz and, in one section, described her theory that the two hemispheres of the brain could hold separate values and genders and "often desire to kill each other."

LaSota, who used she/her pronouns, and in her writings says she is a transgender woman, railed against perceived enemies, including so-called rationalist groups, which operate mostly online and seek to understand human cognition through reason and knowledge. □

**Associated Press**

# Many weary Ukrainians long for an end to the war but now fear it will come on unfavorable terms

By JUSTIN SPIKE

Associated Press

**KYIV, Ukraine (AP)** — After nearly three years of living under constant threat of Russian airstrikes while their troops fight a grinding campaign against Russia's invasion, many Ukrainians long for an end to the war but now fear it could come on unfavorable terms.

Top U.S. and Russian officials plan to meet Tuesday in Saudi Arabia to discuss an end to the war without Kyiv's participation rankling some Ukrainians who worry they will be sidelined. "We are being destroyed, Ukraine is suffering, Ukraine is fighting. And our president does not participate?" Lidia Odyntsova, 71, said with disbelief of the upcoming talks. "We are the victims. We should play first fiddle in these talks."

Standing with tears in her eyes beside a snow-covered memorial to fallen Ukrainian soldiers in central Kyiv, she said: "I will not forgive them! I will never forgive!"

While Ukraine will not take part in Tuesday's talks, U.S. State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said



In this photo provided by Ukraine's 24th Mechanised Brigade press service, Ukrainian servicemen fire an MRLS BM-21 'Grad' towards Russian army positions near Chasiv Yar, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Saturday, Feb. 15, 2025.

Associated Press

any actual peace negotiations would only take place with Ukraine's involvement. Still, many Ukrainians are watching a barrage of developments from the United States with apprehension. Ukrainian social media has been flooded with posts reflecting deep unease, and many remain anxiously

glued to their phones for updates.

U.S. President Donald Trump last week sent shockwaves across both sides of the Atlantic after he agreed by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin to begin negotiations abruptly upending a longstanding U.S.-led effort to isolate Moscow

over its invasion. That came the same day that U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said NATO membership for Ukraine was unrealistic and suggested Kyiv should abandon hopes of winning all its territory back from Russia, signaling a view of a potential settlement that is remarkably close to Mos-

cow's.

Ukraine, which has been slowly losing ground to Russia's larger army, was already facing a difficult negotiating position, and Hegseth's comments poured cold water on two key Ukrainian aspirations. While support for an end to the fighting among the country's war-wearied population is widespread, there remains broad agreement that it must not come at the expense of those living in territories occupied by Russia or at the risk of future incursions by Moscow. Speaking to Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" program, U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff didn't directly respond to a question about whether Ukraine would have to give up a "significant portion" of its territory. "Those are details, and I'm not dismissive of the details, they're important. But I think the beginning here is trust-building," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has dismissed the upcoming talks, saying they would "yield no results" given the absence of Ukrainian officials. □

## China says U.S. has 'gravely backpedaled' on Taiwan

**BEIJING (AP)** — China's Foreign Ministry took issue Monday with a revised U.S. government fact sheet that removed a line on American opposition to independence for Taiwan.

The United States has "gravely backpedaled" on its position on Taiwan and sent the wrong message to "separatist forces" on the island, ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 during the civil war that brought the communists to power in China. The defeated Nationalists fled to Taiwan and set up a rival government there. Taiwan has its own government and military but has never declared formal indepen-

dence from China.

"We urge the U.S. to ... stop emboldening and supporting Taiwan independence and avoid further damaging China-U.S. relations and the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait," Guo said when asked about the revision at a daily media briefing. The Taiwan Strait is a narrow waterway that separates the island of Taiwan from China's east coast.

The U.S. State Department removed the phrase "we do not support Taiwan independence" from the fact sheet last week. The document on America's relations with the self-governing island is posted on its website.

Taiwan's government wel-

comed the move, though a statement sent to The Associated Press on Monday did not mention the language specifically.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has noted that the U.S. State Department updated the 'Current State of U.S.-Taiwan Relations' page ... with text that is positive and friendly toward us, reflecting the close and amicable partnership between Taiwan and the United States," it said.

It's not the first time the State Department has removed the phrase. It did so in May 2022 but restored it a few weeks later after a strong protest from China.

It's unclear why the State Department changed



In this photo released by the Taiwan Presidential Office, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te speaks at a press conference after a security meeting about U.S. President Trump's tariffs on trade partners and semiconductors at the Presidential office in Taipei, Friday, Feb. 14, 2025.

Associated Press

the language again and whether it signals any shift in policy under President Donald Trump, who returned to the White House last month.

The government in Taiwan is worried that Trump might

not be as steadfast a supporter of the island as his predecessor, former President Joe Biden.

The U.S. does not recognize Taiwan as a country but is its strongest backer and biggest arms supplier. □

## Mexico awaits new response from Google on dispute over Gulf of Mexico name before filing lawsuit

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — Mexico said Monday it's awaiting a new response from Google to its request that the tech company fully restore the name Gulf of Mexico to its Google Maps service before filing a lawsuit.

President Claudia Sheinbaum shared a letter addressed to her government from Cris Turner, Google's vice president of government affairs and public policy. It says that Google will not change the policy it outlined after U.S. President Donald Trump declared the body of water the Gulf of America.

"We will wait for Google's response and if not, we will proceed to court," Sheinbaum said Monday during a morning press briefing.

As it stands, the gulf appears in Google Maps as Gulf of America within the United States, as Gulf of Mexico within Mexico and Gulf of Mexico (Gulf of America) elsewhere. Turner in his letter said the company was using Gulf of America to follow "longstanding



**Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum gives her daily morning press conference at the National Palace in Mexico City, Monday, Feb. 3, 2025.**

**Associated Press**

maps policies impartially and consistently across all regions" and that the company was willing to meet in person with the Mexican government.

"While international treaties and conventions are not intended to regulate how private mapping provid-

ers represent geographic features, it is our consistent policy to consult multiple authoritative sources to provide the most up to date and accurate representation of the world," he wrote.

Mexico has argued that the mapping policy violates

Mexican sovereignty because the U.S. only has jurisdiction over around 46% of the Gulf. The rest is controlled by Mexico, which controls 49% and Cuba, which controls around 5%. The name Gulf of Mexico dates back to 1607 and is recognized by the United

Nations.

In response to Google's letter, Mexican authorities said they would take legal action, writing that "under no circumstance will Mexico accept the renaming of a geographic zone within its own territory and under its jurisdiction."

The renaming of the body of water by Trump has flared tensions between Mexico and the U.S. at a pivotal time for the neighboring allies.

Sheinbaum has had to walk a fine line with Trump amid threats of tariffs and Mexico and other Latin American countries have braced themselves for promised mass deportations, the brunt of which has still not been felt.

Along with the legal threat to Google, the Mexican president also announced Monday that Mexico and the U.S. would hold high-level meetings this week on trade and security in an effort to maintain a "long-term plan of collaboration" between the two countries. □

## Syria arrests 3 men suspected of links to Tadamon massacre in which hundreds were executed

**OMAR ALBAM and SALLY ABOU ALJOUUD**  
**Associated Press**

**TADAMON, Syria (AP)** — Security forces in Syria said on Monday that they arrested three people involved in the execution of hundreds of civilians by government forces in Damascus in 2013, two years after the country's 13-year civil war began.

Dozens of police and security trucks lined the streets of Tadamon, a Damascus suburb near the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, where they carried out the arrests in the same streets that once bore witness to mass executions. Masked, rifle-wielding men moved through hollowed-out buildings, remnants of a war that turned the district into a front line between government forces and opposition fighters.

In 2022, a leaked video dated April 16, 2013, appeared to contain harrowing footage of the executions. The near seven-minute clip showed members of Syria's notorious Military Intelli-

gence Branch 227 leading a line of about 40 blindfolded prisoners, their hands tied behind their backs, into an abandoned building in Tadamon. One by one, the gunmen pushed

or kicked the prisoners into a trench filled with old tires, shooting them as they fell. One of the three men arrested was Monzer Al-Jazairi, a resident of the Zahira neighborhood and a former operative with the military security that operated before the fall of Bashar Assad in December 2012.

"We used to bring detainees arrested at checkpoints, put them under the buildings here and execute them, and then after we're done, explode the buildings over them," Al-Jazairi told The Associated Press. It was unclear whether Al-Jazairi, flanked by security men as he spoke, was speaking under duress or voluntarily.

"Every batch constituted around 25 (people)," he said, adding that "around one week" passed be-



**Imad Mohammed Al-Mahmoud, center left, and Somer Mohammed Al-Mahmoud, right, alleged former operatives with the military security before the fall of Bashar Assad, are arrested by security forces in Tadamon, a suburb of Damascus, Syria, Monday, Feb. 17, 2025.**

**Associated Press**

tween one batch and the next. He estimated that he and his colleagues killed "around 500" people.

Damascus Security Chief Lt. Col. Abdul Rahman Al-Dabbagh corroborated the number, citing additional confessions from those arrested.

"Many of those killed used to be collected at checkpoints and security (detention) centers, brought to Tadamon neighborhood, where they were executed," Al-Dabbagh told the AP.

The two other arrested suspects were identified as Somer Mohammed Al-Mahmoud and Imad Mohammed Al-Mahmoud.

Years after the Syrian war's worst massacres and mass disappearances, most alleged crimes have not been investigated and remain unpunished. □

## Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you



can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamano-ta Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the Arikok National Park.

The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the

steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □

## Aruban snacks and where to find them

ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese, meat, chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".

These two snacks are typi-



cally found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the island, including on the side of the main road that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find pastechis and krokets at local bakeries and snack shops, like Bright Bakery in Piedra Plat, Huchada in Santa Cruz or

Pastechi House in the city center. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing "batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batido shops next the flea markets downtown, or if you're on your way to San Nicolas, at Mauchi Smoothies and Juice Bar in Savaneta (located at the side of the main road).

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These



vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:

1. Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby Beach.
2. Along the main road next to the airport field.
3. At the California Light House.

4. At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of something local, you maybe just might have to look for them!

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com





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#### Shopping

Paseo Herencia presents a captivating selection of stores catering to various preferences, encompassing beachwear, apparel, fragrances, footwear, jewelry, keepsakes, and much more. Unwind at Maggy's, indulging in their salon services while exploring a range of beauty products. For a memorable gift crafted from natural ingredients, explore Aruba Aloe's offerings. Iconic brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike, and Pandora stand among the favorites.

#### Dining

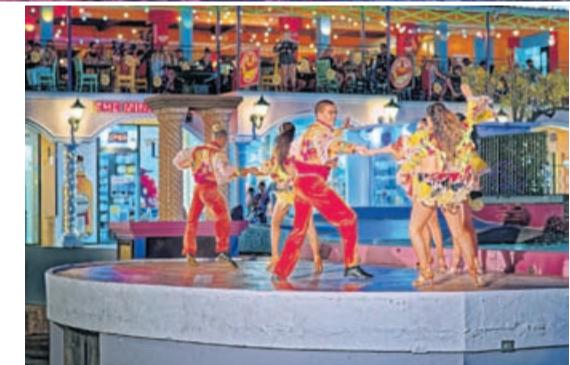
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## Paseo Herencia; An exciting destination for leisure and entertainment



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#### Entertainment

Paseo Herencia offers live entertainment from Sunday to Thursday at 8pm on the center stage, as well as captivating nightly watershows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm, and 9:30pm. Thrill-seekers can explore the Airsoft experience, located behind The Lazy Turtle. For picture-perfect moments, capture Instagram-worthy shots at the Angel Wings installation between Pandora and Free Spirit, or amidst the Flying mosaic hearts behind King Churros. There's more fun in store with delightful kids' activities, including a Kid's carousel and train ride,



Parking is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie at Paseo Herencia. Simply present your purchase receipt to the parking cashier. For more details on specials and events, visit the Paseo Herencia website at [www.paseoherencia.com](http://www.paseoherencia.com). □

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Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard  
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## Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your "off-road" trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations are just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

### Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on



top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding "mondi"\*. This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the

highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort and peace.

### Casibari

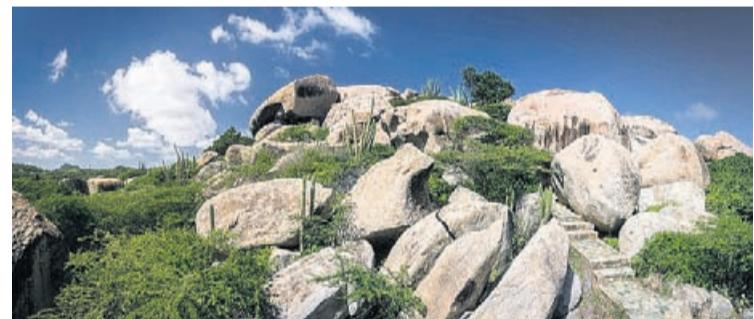
Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several



boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat boulder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casibari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continuing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

\*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi! □



## Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Marriott's Aruba Surf Club!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10+ years con-

secutively visiting Aruba)  
Goodwill Ambassador (20+ years consecutively visiting Aruba)  
Emerald Ambassador (35+ years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:  
Goodwill Ambassadors

Mr. Mark & Mrs. Lisa Lisa from Cedar

Knolls New Jersey, United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Marriott's Aruba Surf Club bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favor-

ite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba's people.
- Aruba's weather.
- Aruba is easy to fly to.
- "Hotel is beautiful"
- "The feeling of safety & comfort on the island"



On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □

## Visit the island's popular cave sites!



**(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadiriki cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an “off-road” tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves...and be sure to bring a flashlight!**

### Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadiriki Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadiriki cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri

Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadiriki cave, the two love bird found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadiriki Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

### Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual

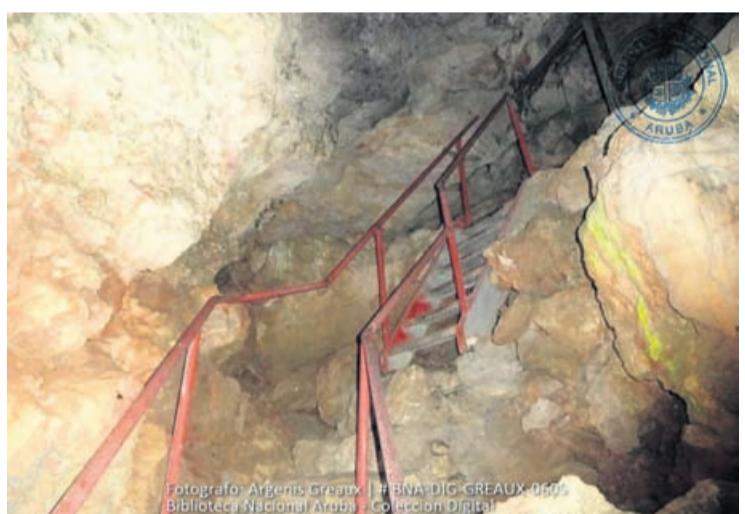
ceremonies.

### The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Arawak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy, and don't forget to bring a flashlight!□



## The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

(Oranjestad)—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamento: "kibra" (break) "hacha" (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its neighboring trees to starts blooming first.

### The legend of the Kibrahacha

Written by Hubert (Lio Booij)

One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudawecha, who was a epistemophile, to come see his father.

Aterima wasted no time and went to go fetch Kudawecha. Upon telling Kudawecha that her father was sick, he immediately accompanied Aterima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aretima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudawecha was determined to bring back Aretima's father back to health, and so off they went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the tree, they saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudawecha, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora and fauna, told Aretima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aretima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start.

To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aretima continued plucking with enthusiasm and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers. Kudawecha, satisfied to see Aretima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut.

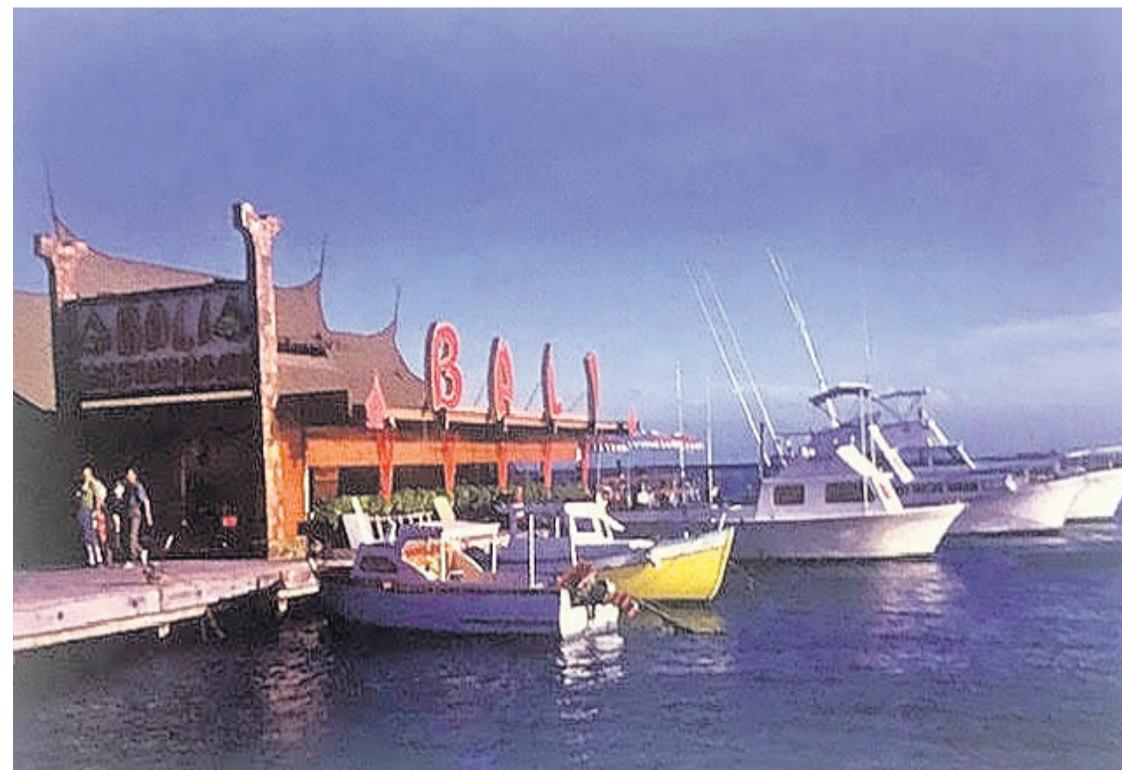
Upon arriving back at the hut, Aretima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously,



after just one sip of the tea, the father's fever left his body immediately, and he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aretima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns. □

## The Bali Restaurant: a touristic hot spot and lost gem on the island



(Oranjestad)—Once located in what is now the Renaissance Marina, the Bali Restaurant was once both a touristic and local hot spot, and nowadays it's considered a forgotten gem on the island.

Known as "the floating restaurant", Bali first opened in 1955 by Willem "Bill" Strijland, who had experience in Javanese cuisine. At the time, the restaurant was pretty exclusive—with space to host

only 25 guests. Yet, 4 years later, it was named the best restaurant in the Caribbean by the Caribbean Tourist Association.

The restaurant was probably most iconic for its Javanese-inspired exterior with its pointy, slanted roofs. However, the first version of Bali did not look like that at all but was still considered as one of the most popular restaurants on the island at the time. The restaurant saw

three different owners during its existence, during which it underwent various renovations and rebranding.

In 1964, the restaurant was taken over by Karel "Carl" Schmand. Over the years, the restaurant needed constant renovation and repair, mainly due to its vulnerability to leaks and the unstable pillars underneath the foundation. However, the biggest change made to the restaurant happened



in the year 1970—still under the ownership of Schmand, when it got its iconic pointy roofs. The restaurant was also expanded to host a total of 85 guests. This was "The New Bali", who had its official (re) opening in 1972.

After 1972, when Ronny Schmand took over, the restaurant saw yet another expansion; this time complete with a long bar and dance floor, where guests enjoyed live music from legendary Aruban musician and composer, Toti Arends.

After 1989, the restaurant was again handed over to other owners, and since then suffered from unstable pillars underneath the foundation, resulting in various leaks and

overflowing of water into the restaurant. And as most great things come to an end, so did the survival and maintenance of the Bali Restaurant. However, folks today still reminisce its legacy, and it's now considered a lost monument.

Be apart of the conversation: if you or any family member of yours have a memory of the Bali restaurant, whether it be a picture or just a story, share it with us! We would love to see this legendary hot spot through the lens of our visitors! □

**Source and pictures credit to:**  
"De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.

## CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 42 Train stop

1 Renowned 43 Parcels

6 Sired

out

11 Find

darling

12 Without

aid

13 People of

northeast

Spain

15 Sense

of self

16 Luggage

ID

17 Attain

18 Real brats

20 Chopping

tool

21 "— longa,

vita

brevis"

22 Layer

23 Stupid

jerk

26 Breezes

27 Thunder

sound

28 Golf

position

29 Crater

part

30 1984

Patrick

Swayze

film

34 French

friend

35 Count

start

36 Compete

37 People of

southern

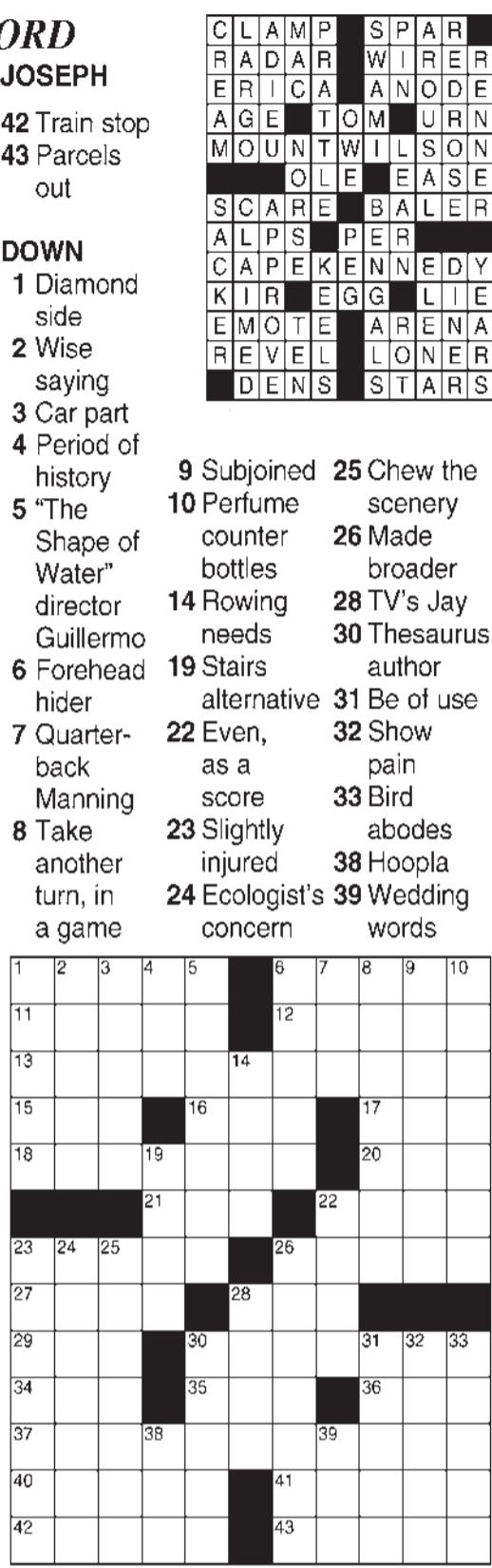
Argentina

and Chile

40 Piano

piece

41 Decree



A X Y D L B A A X R  
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-20

CRYPTOQUOTE

Y P Y I N X C V H C T D C P H N L H

X C V N L J A K A A D H N A O L I H

W U A L Z C S Z X I C V O .

— M N L U O A I W Y M T A D I  
Cryptoquote: CHANGE WILL NOT  
COME IF WE WAIT FOR SOME OTHER PERSON  
OR SOME OTHER TIME. WE ARE THE ONES  
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. — BARACK OBAMA

## Cruise ship Schedule: February 17 - 23 2025

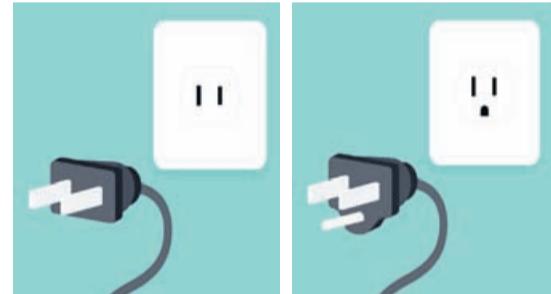
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH
MON	17	RESILIENT LADY	09.00	23.59	C 1
TUE	18	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	23.00	C 1
		NORWEGIAN VIVA	13.00	21.00	I 1
WED	19	ROTTERDAM	08.00	17.00	B 1
		EMERALD PRINCESS	09.00	****	C 1
		CELEBRITY REFLECTION	08.00	21.00	I 1
THU	20	EMERALD PRINCESS - Dept.	****	22.00	C
SAT	22	OCEANIA SIRENA	11.00	21.00	C 1
SUN	23	EXPLORA II	08.00	21.00	C 1

## Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

### Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



### Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



### Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



### Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



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Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.  
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668  
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.  
Acc. #23951903  
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

## 'Anora' breakout Yura Borisov is not sure what 'Russian Ryan Gosling' means. But he'll take it

By LINDSEY BAHR

AP Film Writer

Yura Borisov does not have a flashy entrance in "Anora." His character Igor isn't even introduced until the movie's nearly halfway through. He's just the hired muscle, quietly observing and reacting to the quickly devolving situation around him. And yet you can't take your eyes off of this stranger.

Up until that point it's been the Mikey Madison show, a chronicle of her character Ani's whirlwind romance with the spendy, wild son of a Russian oligarch. Igor arrives at the turning point, the end of the honeymoon and the beginning of a swift descent into a chaotic, all-night manhunt. And soon he establishes himself not just as an intriguing outsider, but the soul of the film: The henchman with a heart.

It's a performance that has caught many off guard: An introduction to a fresh face with an undeniable star quality that has earned him nominations from the Oscars, the Screen Actors Guild and the BAFTAs. But Borisov, 32, is only a newcomer in some parts of the world. Already a star in Russia, Borisov broke through on the international scene in the Cannes title "Com-



Russian actor Yura Borisov, from the film "Anora," poses for a portrait on Friday, Feb. 14, 2025, in London.

partment No. 6" as the uncouth miner sharing a cramped room with a Finnish student on a long train ride through Russia. That was the performance that made filmmaker Sean Baker take note and give him a call about participating in what would become "Anora." Baker has described his secret weapon, who quickly becomes the beating heart and soul of the film, as the "Russian Ryan Gosling." Borisov is flattered, but also little confused by the comparison.

"I love Ryan Gosling and very interested to work with him one day. I've seen his films. He plays very, very cool. But I don't know what he means," Borisov laughed. "Let's ask Sean." Baker, for his part, knew he had a ringer in Borisov but doesn't show his hand from the top. He strings the audience along, letting them feel like they're discovering something too. The 28-minute real-time home invasion scene where we meet Igor was actually Borisov's first to film. It was rehearsed

and discussed in detail before the cameras started rolling. In all, it took about eight days to film and three months to edit.

"We discussed everything trying to find the balance humor and scares and drama and comedy because it's important for this scene to," Borisov said. "But for me I'm just thinking about a real person named Igor and a real person named Anora."

He and Baker spoke a lot about Igor's past, his story, his dreams and his clothes.

Associated Press

The white Nike sneakers as contrast to Igor's all black outfit, he thought, were particularly poignant a symbol of Igor's soul. He liked that his director would ask him if he thought Igor might do this or that instead of just telling him to do something. But Borisov is not the kind of actor who thinks that he has much interesting to say or explain about his performance. If he could, he said, he'd be a writer. For him, it's the work that does the talking.

"The most important is what do you feel when you see the film," he said. "It's not so important what we were discussing." The week that Borisov spoke to the AP was the week "Anora" had emerged as the frontrunner in an awards race that had previously been wide open. The supporting actor category however, competitive as it may be with nominees like Edward Norton, Guy Pearce and Jeremy Strong, has been considered Kieran Culkin's to lose for some time now. But it's still significant: Borisov is the first Russian actor to get an Oscar nomination since Mikhail Baryshnikov's nod in 1977 for "The Turning Point." "I'm happy that it means something for a lot of people and that's why it means a lot for me," he said. □

## Mexican musical legend Paquita la del Barrio dies at 77

By BERENICE BAUTISTA

Associated Press

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — Mexican musical legend Paquita la del Barrio, known for her powerful voice and fierce defense of women, died at her home in Veracruz early Monday at the age of 77.

Her passing was announced on her official social media accounts and confirmed by her representatives to The Associated Press. The state capital of Veracruz will mourn the loss of the iconic singer, who had faced a number of recent health problems.

"With deep pain and sadness we confirm the sensitive passing of our beloved

'Paquita la del Barrio' at her home in Veracruz," the statement said. "She was a

unique and unrepeatable artist who will leave an indelible mark in the hearts of

all of us who knew her and enjoyed her music."

Born Francisca Viveros Barraza, Paquita la del Barrio captivated audiences with songs of heartbreak and betrayal, including anthems like "Rata de dos patas" and "Tres veces te engañé."

While her fan base was predominantly women, her powerful performances also drew men to her concerts.

"At the beginning, many men said 'Why would I go, to get shamed? ... Now they join the concerts. They go with their girlfriend, their wife and they love it," Paquita said in a 2016 interview with the AP.



Mexican singer Paquita La Del Barrio poses backstage with the Premio La Voz at the first annual Mexican Billboard Awards, Oct. 20, 2011, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

A two-time Grammy and Latin Grammy nominee, Paquita la del Barrio received recognition from across the industry, including the Billboard Latin Music Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2021, which was presented to her by Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny.

News of her death sparked an outpouring of grief on social media. The Latin Grammys and Apple Music were among the many who took to social media to mourn her passing.

"RIP Paquita la del Barrio, the feminist icon from Mexico who sang what others were afraid to say," wrote Apple Music on the social platform X. □

## Why can't Kyle Larson win the Daytona 500? Jeff Gordon believes defeats are 'getting in his head'

By JENNA FRYER  
AP Auto Racing Writer  
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP)

— Owen Larson called it when he said his dad wouldn't win the Daytona 500 because "he probably needs to try really hard because he's not good at superspeedway racing."

The 10-year-old was right in his assessment. Kyle Larson can win just about anywhere in any type of car. But when it comes to Daytona and Talladega, NASCAR's 2021 Cup Series champion is a disaster.

Larson dropped to 0 for 22 at Daytona International Speedway — it's 0 for 42 in the Cup Series once Talladega Superspeedway's stats are included — when he finished 20th in Sunday night's Daytona 500.

The Associated Press was embedded with the Hendrick Motorsports No. 5 team with a front row seat for his 201 frustrating laps in which Larson complained over his radio that "I make all the wrong moves. Any move I make is the wrong



Kyle Larson waits while his crew makes adjustments to his car during a practice session for the NASCAR Daytona 500 auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Saturday, July 15, 2025, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

one." His exacerbation only mounted when all three of his Hendrick teammates led laps, William Byron won for a second consecutive year, and Byron and Alex Bowman finished inside the top-six. Chase Elliott was 15th. Jeff Gordon, the vice

chairman at Hendrick Motorsports and a three-time Daytona 500 winner, didn't dispute Larson's notion of not being able to properly navigate the pack racing typical of Daytona International Speedway.

"I noticed that," he said

of Larson's declaration he couldn't make a single right move. "I can be hard on him because I love Kyle and I think he's amazing." Larson is amazing and opened 2025 with a slew of victories, including in sprint cars in Australia, the Chili

Bowl and at Volusia Speedway in the lead-up to the Daytona 500.

But, just as his oldest son predicted, he was a non-factor at Daytona despite every motivational speech crew chief Cliff Daniels tried on his driver. The two have been paired since Larson moved to Hendrick and the No. 5 team in 2021 and won 10 races and the Cup title.

Larson has won 23 Cup races since his move to Hendrick, and for that, the leadership at Hendrick is able to give him a pass on his struggles at superspeedways.

"Gosh, the guy is not perfect," Gordon said, but added that his struggles have now become bigger than just not being able to feel confident at Daytona or Talladega. "I think now I'm starting to see it's getting in his head. I've had a few conversations with him, and like, 'Man, just go for it, just forget about it, don't try to even overthink it,'" Gordon said. □

## WADA explains reasons for different doping bans for Sinner and Spanish figure skater

By TALES AZZONI  
AP Sports Writer

**MADRID (AP)** — The World Anti-Doping Agency on Monday offered an explanation for why top-ranked tennis player Jannik Sinner received a much shorter doping ban than the six-year suspension it handed to a Spanish figure skater in a similar doping case.

Spanish media has been calling attention to the lengthy ban handed to local skater Laura Barquero after she tested positive for the anabolic Clostebol, the same substance that earned Sinner a three-month ban after a settlement reached between WADA and the Italian tennis player on Saturday. The deal was criticized by many of his fellow tennis professionals this weekend.

WADA pointed out that

while both cases involved the same substance, the specific facts related to Barquero's case were "very different" to Sinner's. "The fundamental difference between the two cases is that Ms. Barquero's version of how the substance entered her system was unconvincing in light of the evidence, such that the circumstances remained unknown as far as WADA was concerned," WADA said in an email sent to The Associated Press. "In contrast, in the Sinner case, the evidence clearly confirmed the athlete's explanation as outlined in the first instance decision."

Barquero first tested positive for Clostebol during the 2022 Winter Olympics, then again in January 2023 in an out-of-competition test carried out by the In-

ternational Skating Union. WADA eventually entered into a "case resolution agreement" in which the athlete was suspended for six years. It said the agreement was accepted and signed by WADA, the ISU and the athlete herself.

"If Ms. Barquero did not agree with the proposed sanction, she was not obliged to sign the case resolution agreement and was free to take the case forward for hearing at CAS," WADA said.

The agency had sought to ban Sinner, a three-time Grand Slam champion, for at least one year. It had challenged a decision last year by the International Tennis Integrity Agency not to suspend Sinner for what the ITIA judged was accidental contamination of the banned anabolic steroid last March.

WADA formally withdrew its appeal saying it accepted the athlete's explanation for the cause of the violation, and that Sinner did not intend to cheat.

Sinner's explanation was that trace amounts of Clo-

stebol in his doping sample was due to a massage from a trainer who used the substance after cutting his own finger.

Barquero was expected to make a public comment later on Monday. □



Jannik Sinner of Italy celebrates after defeating Alexander Zverev of Germany in the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Jan. 26, 2025.

Associated Press

# The All-Star break is almost over. It's time for the stretch run toward the NBA playoffs

By TIM REYNOLDS

AP Basketball Writer

The trade deadline is gone. The All-Star break is about to end. Luka Doncic is with the Los Angeles Lakers. Jimmy Butler is with the Golden State Warriors. Anthony Davis is with the Dallas Mavericks, though it's unknown when he'll play again.

The dust has settled. It's time for the stretch run. Here comes the fun part of the season. Every club has between 26 and 30 games remaining in this 7 1/2-week sprint to the April 13 finish line, play resuming Wednesday when Charlotte faces the Lakers. And teams will point to recent history as proof that just



Team Shaq's Kevin Durant, Damian Lillard, Jayson Tatum and Stephen Curry hold up the championship trophy following the 74th NBA All-Star Game in San Francisco, Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025.

Associated Press

Experience Aruban culture with this exciting theme night featuring a Carnival show, mixology bar, local artists and more. You can sample Aruban cuisine, including delicious BBQ options with a tropical twist. A local brass band will be performing, and you can pose with elaborately dressed Carnival dancers for a memorable photo op as well, so don't miss it.

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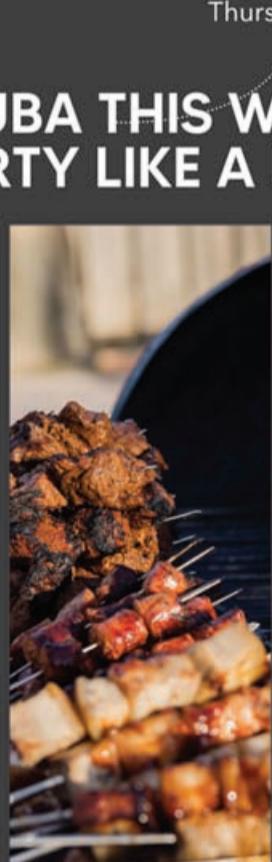
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"We have a little bit more experience. We have an opportunity to, for sure, win an NBA championship. Now we're going to have to earn it."

Then there's the other end of the spectrum, that being the teams that are out of the mix.

Over the last 20 seasons, 98.8% of the teams that have winning percentages under .400 at the break wind up missing the playoffs. If that form holds, that eliminates Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Toronto, Charlotte, Utah, New Orleans and Washington.

So, based on the numbers, that means seven teams are in, seven teams are out, and 16 teams remain in the middle fighting for what will be the last nine playoff spots five to be clinched on or before the end of the regular season on April 13, four others to be won in the play-in tournament later that week.

"The last 25 to 30 games are really important for everyone," said Miami guard Tyler Herro, the league's new 3-point shootout champion. "We've got a new group, in a sense, and we're going to hit the ground running. It's going to happen fast. Everything is going to matter throughout this next month and a half."

The Heat traded Butler to the Warriors, getting back Andrew Wiggins in return. San Antonio landed De'Aaron Fox from Sacramento, and the Los Angeles Clippers who have barely had Kawhi Leonard available this season, but he's playing now figure they're right in the mix to challenge as well.

"I think we got a really good chance," Clippers All-Star guard James Harden said.

"We added some shooting, we added some defense and obviously with a healthy Kawhi we've got a chance to compete with anybody."

So, I think for us, it's just finding out how we want to play and attacking it." □

getting into the playoffs means anything can happen: No. 5, No. 6, No. 7 and No. 8 seeds have made their way to the conference finals in the last two years alone.

"I'm looking forward to the challenge," said the Warriors' Stephen Curry, the now two-time All-Star Game MVP.

"It's basically a playoff game every single night, and that usually brings the best out of you."

Some teams can go ahead and start planning for the playoffs.

Oklahoma City and Cleveland are both 44-10, tied for the best record in the league. Defending champion Boston, currently No. 2 in the Eastern Conference, remains on pace to obliterate league records for 3-pointers made and attempted in a season. The Celtics, New York, Denver, Houston and the Lakers all have winning percentages over .600, which is an excellent sign 132 of the last 133 teams to reach the break with such a record have wound up making the postseason.

"We have obviously a pretty good basketball team," said Oklahoma City All-Star guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the current MVP favorite according to BetMGM Sportsbook.